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HOMEMAKERS CHAT

Friday, April 14, 1939.

(For Broadcast Use Only)

Subject: "HAM". Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

--ooOoo--

Today I'm bringing you some news from the Department of Agriculture about ham. And since my news is good I'm following it with some suggestions--for buying ham and for cooking ham.

Here's my good news to start off--about ham prices. They're reasonable this spring according to the men who keep track of the nation's meat prices from year to year. In fact, prices of all cured pork products are reasonable this season. So that means bacon and cured pork shoulders as well as ham.

Of course, if you get your ham from your own smokehouse, this news of prices may be only of passing interest to you. But, whether you cure your own ham --or buy it--here are some of the ways to tell a good one. These pointers are from an expert judge of meat quality in the Department of Agriculture. He says,--

"Ham quality, to some extent, can be judged by looks. The best ones are meaty, thick through, and well-rounded. They have a shank that is moderately short--instead of one that's so long it makes the whole ham look funnel-shaped.

"Another mark of ham quality is a good bright color of lean. Another is a marbling of fat through the lean. However, an absence of this marbling is not especially significant--because many good hams do not have it.

"To be an economical buy, a ham should not have a wasteful amount of fat. You can see how much fat there is easily if the ham has been cut. But you can also tell how much there is on an uncut ham--if you look at the butt end of it as it lies on the butcher's counter."



As you probably know, ham is one of the few roasts that may be cut in two and still be roasted successfully. Sometimes the slices from the center are sold separately. Then each end is sold as a ham "half". If your family is not large enough to do away with a whole ham--you may be able to get half a ham that's the right size. Ham hocks usually are plentiful on the market-- at bargain prices. And they make excellent meat for flavoring.

And here's a tip for storing the ham after you buy it.

"It's a good idea to wrap ham--cooked or uncooked--in oiled paper and to put it in a refrigerator. Spread a little cooking oil over the cut surface of an uncooked ham--if you want to delay drying out and molding."

Now for a few suggestions as to cooking ham--the most interesting part of all as far as I'm concerned--next to the eating. A ham that's been cooked right--then glazed--studded with cloves--or decorated with pineapple slices and cherries--is a thing of beauty--and a joy to taste.

But before I get too poetic, I want to remind you that one of the first things to remember when cooking ham--just as any pork--is to cook it thoroughly--until it is well-done.

The way to cook a whole or half ham is to do it slowly--at low temperature. Cook a "boiled" ham in water that's just simmering. Or bake a ham in a slow oven. An oven temperature of 250 to 260 degrees Fahrenheit is recommended.

And now, step-by-step directions for preparing ham for the table.

"Whether a ham is soaked or not before cooking depends upon the cure. If this has been mild, soaking is not necessary. But, for strongly cured hams, soaking is advisable--overnight or longer in cold water to cover, for hams cooked whole; just a short time for slices that are to be broiled or fried.

"To bake a ham, put it on a rack in an open pan--rind side up. Add no water



and use no cover on the pan. Keep the oven temperature at about 250 to 260 degrees Fahrenheit.

"If a meat thermometer is inserted into the center of the roast, the ham is done when that registers 170 degrees Fahrenheit. For hams that have been cured and smoked the conventional way, this baking will take from 25 to 30 minutes for every pound of meat. A half ham will take longer to cook per pound."

It takes about the same amount of time to cook a ham if you simmer it in a kettle--with water to cover.

Whether ham is served hot or cold--cut it in very thin slices. To accompany it, you may have raisin or cider sauce. Or maybe some fresh grated horseradish mixed with whipped cream. Broiled peaches, fried pineapple, or apple slices--all go well with any of the cured pork roasts.

And as for left-overs, every scrap of cooked ham is good for seasoning. Grind it up and roll it in an omelet. Make it into a spread for canapes. Mix it in potato cakes. Use it as part of the seasoning for devilling hard-cooked eggs. Spread it on toast--under a poached egg.

And now that I've hit the high points for ham--from buying it to using the left-overs I want to remind you of the good news that started this broadcast. Ham and all cured pork products are priced reasonably this spring.

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